

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany (C)

Jeremiah 17.5-10

Psalm 1

1 Corinthians 15.12-20

Luke 6.17-26

Jeremiah 17.5-10

1. In this section of his book, Jeremiah still prophesies under the reign of Jehoiakim.
 - a. This particular lesson comes from a small collection of “sapiential sayings” (akin to Wisdom literature) found in Jeremiah.
 - i. These Wisdom sayings are different in style and content from much of the rest of the book, and scholars have disputed whether or not they represent the insertion of a later editor.
 - ii. The teaching here is consistent with the common themes in Wisdom literature: to rely not on mortals but on God.
 - b. The idea of the just man being like a green tree is common.
 - a. Compare Ps. 52.10; Prov. 3.18; 11.13; Wis. 24.13ff.
 - b. The teaching here uses the structure of “antithetical synonymy”:
 - i. This is a type of “compare and contrast” structure using the same metaphor (*e.g.*, a tree).
3. The other common Wisdom theme represented here is that of trust in God instead of mortals:
 - a. Compare Pss. 39.5; 117.8-9; 145.3ff.
 - b. The closest parallel is found, in fact, in the psalm used in today’s lessons (Psalm 1).
4. The final saying here concerns the root of evil in the human heart.
 - a. The final verse here, in which the LORD speaks of how He “test the mind and search the heart” has a genuine Jeremian ring, and thus the overall collection of sayings may be from the prophet himself, using Wisdom traditions within his own oracles.

Psalm 1

1. A Wisdom psalm which serves as a preface to the overall psalter.
2. The psalm is structured in two parts, each part being (in Hebrew) a *chiasm*.
 - a. A chiasm is a literary form in which verse or idiomatic parallels mirror each other, separated by other verses, in an overall parallel structure, such as:

A	B	C
A	B	C
3. The two parts here involve vv. 1-2 (the righteous man is diligent in the study of the Law) and vv. 5-6 (the wicked and their fate).
 - a. v. 3 is a simile of a tree, with v. 4 using the simile of chaff.
 - b. Therefore, the structure is:

The righteous (A)
1. Simile (B)
2. Simile (B)

ii. The wicked (A)

1 Corinthians 15.12-20

1. Paul here continues with his argument concerning the uniqueness and fundamental nature of the Resurrection (which comprises all of chapter 15).
2. Paul points out to the Corinthians that if their thesis (that the dead are not raised) is true, that four conclusions flow from this:
 - a. Christ has not been raised.
 - b. Paul's preaching is in vain.
 - i. The word Paul uses for "vain" (*kenos*) means "nonproductive" (cf. 1 Cor. 15.10, 58; 2 Cor. 6.1; Phil. 2.16; 1 Thess. 2.1, 3.5).
 1. If the Corinthians are right, Paul's preaching has brought nothing new into being, and the Corinthians are unchanged.
 - c. The faith of the Corinthians is meaningless, and they are still sinners.
 - i. "[Y]our faith is futile ..." Paul intensifies the "nonproductivity" of *kenos* by now using the word *mataia* (ineffective). The Corinthians had thought themselves changed as "spirit people," but if the dead are not raised, their faith is completely of no effect, in this life or in the next.
 - d. Those who died as Christians are definitively lost.
3. He concludes on the emotional note (v.19), that "we are of all people most to be pitied."
4. To deny the resurrection of the dead would be for the Corinthians to be no different from any other pagan, living in an unfounded hope of some future state of beatitude.

Luke 6.17-26

1. After depicting Jesus encountering the hostility of the religious authorities (5.17-6.11) and the calling of His twelve disciples (6.12-16), Luke now passes to the "Sermon on the Plain," which is his parallel to the "Sermon on the Mount" found in Matthew (chs. 5-7).
 - a. The two parallel sermons may in fact have arisen from the same oral tradition, despite their different settings.
2. Luke's version presents four problems:
 - a. Sources, audience, meaning of "poor," and Luke's intention.
 - i. These issues intersect in the theme of the sharing of possessions.
 1. Luke has "poor" where Matthew has "poor in spirit."
 - a. Luke echoes a Jewish theme that God has a special interest in the dispossessed.
 - b. Luke omits much of the material found in Matthew, but adds specific instructions on sharing possessions, on lending money, on pardoning debts, and giving unstintingly.
 - i. These are not the sort of instruction to be given to poor, dispossessed people, but to those with funds and possessions (*i.e.*, *not* the disciples).
 1. The Sermon on the Plain may, therefore, recount a different address to a different audience.

3. Jesus, in addressing those with possessions, makes clear that the advent of the kingdom is clearest to those who are “poor” with respect to God, *i.e.*, those who confess that God’s kingdom is effected through and by Jesus.
 - a. The “rich,” in contrast, look to effect salvation through their own efforts.